

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 PANAMA 00373 01 OF 02 170241Z

66

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /051 W
----- 013951

O R 170120Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6391

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

PANCANAL

USCINCSO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 0373/1

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN, CU

SUBJECT: TORRIJOS TRIP TO CUBA: IMPACT AND PRESS TREATMENT

SUMMARY: IF PANAMANIAN LEFTISTS OR PERSONS ELSEWHERE EXPECTED TORRIJOS TO MAKE A RINGING ENDORSEMENT OF SOCIALISM DURING HIS VISIT TO CUBA, THEY WERE SORELY DISAPPOINTED. TORRIJOS, IN HIS FINAL PRESS CONFERENCE AND IN OTHER STATEMENTS REPORTED HERE, DID ACKNOWLEDGE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION, PARTICULARLY IN EDUCATION, BUT ALSO HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE TAKING DIFFERENT PATHS TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 PANAMA 00373 01 OF 02 170241Z

JUSTICE FOR THEIR PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH THE WARMTH AND EXTENT OF

THE RECEPTION THEY RECEIVED EXCEEDED THEIR BEST EXPECTATIONS, TORRIJOS AND HIS GROUP, ACCORDING TO A US JOURNALIST WHO ACCOMPANIED THEM, MAINTAINED A DISCREET IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THEIR HOSTS. PRESS REPORTS IN PANAMA THROUGHOUT THE VISIT, WHILE EMPHASIZING REVOLUTIONARY SOLIDARITY, HAVE PLAYED AND REPLAYED TORRIJOS' STATEMENTS THAT THE TWO REVOLUTIONS ARE TAKING DIFFERENT ROADS TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS. END SUMMARY.

1. "TORRIJOS DOES NOT WANT SOCIALISM FOR PANAMA" WAS LA ESTRELLA'S HEADLINE GREETING TO PANAMANIAN JANUARY 16 FOLLOWING GENERAL TORRIJOS' TRIUMPHANT RETURN FROM HIS FIVE-DAY TOUR OF CUBA. THOSE WORDS WERE SECONDED BY ANOTHER HEADLINED STATEMENT TORRIJOS MADE IN CUBA: "PANAMA CAN ACHIEVE THE SAME GOALS AS THE CUBAN REVOLUTION, BUT BY DIFFERENT WAYS THAN SOCIALISM." THESE ASSERTIONS SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING TO PANAMANIAN OR TO TORRIJOS-WATCHERS ELSEWHERE. TORRIJOS PREVIOUSLY HAD REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT HIS GOVERNMENT CAN ACHIEVE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MORE EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH WITHOUT THE HARSH MEASURES DEMANDED BY MARXISM. NEVER BEFORE, HOWEVER, HAD HIS FORMULA FOR A PEACEFUL REVOLUTION "AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE SOCIAL COSTS" BEEN SO STARKLY CONTRASTED WITH THE RIGID ORTHODOXY OF CUBAN MARXISM.

2. THE PRO-GOP EL PANAMA AMERICA OF JANUARY 15 PUBLISHED A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TITLED "THE TRUTH OF PANAMA BEFORE THE WORLD" SETTING THE CUBA VISIT IN PERSPECTIVE, TEXTUALLY AND PHOTOGRAPHICALLY, BE REVIEWING ALL OF TORRIJOS' TRIPS ABROAD DURING RECENT YEARS, HIGHLIGHTING THE SUPPORT TORRIJOS HAS GENERATED FOR PANAMA'S CAUSE. THE SUPPLEMENT DESCRIBED THE TORRIJOS-CASTRO ENCOUNTER AS A MEETING OF TWO CONTROVERSIAL FIGURES, EACH RECOGNIZED AS THE UNDISPUTED LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE, BUT "CERTAINLY NOT SIMILAR IN MANY WAYS." WHEREAS CASTRO HAD OPTED FOR "RIGOROUS ORTHODOX SOCIALISM WITHOUT SHUNNING REALLY VIOLENT METHODS," TORRIJOS HAD INSTITUTIONALIZED A DIFFERENT, FLEXIBLE AND PEACEFUL PROCESS NOT ENCUMBERED BY ORTHODOX METHODS OR IDEOLOGY.

3. ALL LOCAL REPORTS OF THE VISIT DURING THE PAST WEEK HAVE REPEATED IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER THE PITHY PHRASES TORRIJOS HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 PANAMA 00373 01 OF 02 170241Z

USED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS TO CHARACTERIZE THE PRAGMATIC, FLEXIBLE, EXPERIMENTAL NATURE OF THE PANAMANIAN REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS. TORRIJOS' PRESCRIPTION OF A "PANAMANIAN ASPIRIN FOR PANAMA'S HEADACHE" WAS REVALIDATED BY HIS STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS IN CUBA. THE TREMENDOUS RECEPTION - CAREFULLY STAGED AND PERHAPS OVERLY ORGANIZED - DID NOT SWEEP TORRIJOS AND HIS ENTOURAGE OFF THEIR FEET, ALTHOUGH A PANAMANIAN OFFICIAL WHO ACCOMPANIED TORRIJOS TOLD US THAT THE POPULAR CROWD RECEPTION

OF TORRIJOS, PARTICULARLY THE RESPONSE TO HIS SPEECH IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA, WAS "FAR ABOVE OUR BEST EXPECTATIONS".

4. TORRIJOS' VARIOUS STATEMENTS ON THE CANAL ISSUE WERE GENERALLY RESTRAINED AND STATESMANLIKE. IN ESSENCE HE TOLD THE CUBANS THAT PANAMA WAS ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND HAD CHOSEN NEGOTIATION AS THE TOOL TO ACHIEVE IT. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE JANUARY 15, TORRIJOS RESPONDED TO THE INEVITABLE QUESTION CONCERNING WHAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD DO IF THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS BROKE DOWN BY SAYING THAT WAS NOT A GOVERNMENTAL PROBLEM. THE PEOPLE WOULD REACT; HIS CHOICE WOULD BE TO LEAD OR CRUSH THEM, AND HE WOULD NOT CRUSH THEM.

5. CUBAN ACHIEVEMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN EDUCATION, WERE PRAISED BY TORRIJOS IN HIS HAVANA PRESS CONFERENCE JANUARY 15, BUT HE EMPHATICALLY POINTED OUT THAT "SOCIALISM IS ONLY ONE WAY" OF ACHIEVING A JUST SOCIETY--THERE WERE OTHERS.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 PANAMA 00373 02 OF 02 170248Z

66

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /051 W
----- 014089

O R 170120Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6392

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

PANCANAL
USCINCSO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 0373/2

6. NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT DAVID BINDER, WHO ACCOMPANIED TORRIJOS, HAS GIVEN EMBASSY OFFICERS HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE TRIP. HE HAD DEVELOPED A GREAT ADMIRATION FOR TORRIJOS AND PANAMANIAN, HE SAID. ALTHOUGH THE PANAMANIAN ESTABLISHED GOOD RAPPORT WITH THE CUBANS AND THOROUGHLY ENJOYED THE VISIT, THEY WERE NOT AT ALL SWEEPED OFF THEIR FEET BY THEIR RECEPTION IN CUBA OR THEIR HOSTS' ATTENTIONS. THEY KEPT A SKEPTICAL EYE AND WERE SHOCKED AT TIMES--DURING A GUERRILLA BALLET FOR ONE--AND WERE NOT OVERLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE ORGANIZED, RIGID APPROACH OF THE CUBANS. BINDER ILLUSTRATED THIS ATTITUDE WITH THE FOLLOWING ANECDOTE. "FOLLOWING A 9-MATCH BOXING TOURNAMENT AT
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 PANAMA 00373 02 OF 02 170248Z

CAMAGUEY STADIUM TUESDAY NIGHT, THE CUBANS GAVE THE PANAMANIAN THEIR FOURTH MEAL OF THE DAY AT MIDNIGHT. AFTERWARDS, OVERSTUFFED AND REELING WITH FATIGUE, THE GROUP WAS HERDED TO THEIR PLANE TO FLY BACK TO HAVANA WITH THE PROSPECT OF GETTING TO BED AT 4:00 A.M. AS THEY SETTLED IN THEIR BUS, THE CUBAN GUIDE ANNOUNCED: 'TODAY AT 9:00 A.M. WE GO TO THE LENIN SCHOOL.' AFTER A MOMENT OF STUNNED SILENCE THE PANAMANIAN EXPLODED WITH THUNDEROUS LAUGHTER AND SOMEONE SHOUTED: 'WE'VE BEEN AT THE LENIN SCHOOL ALL WEEK.'"

7. BINDER CONFIRMED REPORTS WE HAD FROM PANAMANIAN THAT TORRIJOS ELECITED ENTHUSIASM FROM CUBAN CROWDS WHEREEVER HE SPOKE. THE HIGH POINT OF THE TRIP IN THIS RESPECT WAS IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA WHERE, BINDER SAID, TORRIJOS "HELD THEM IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND" ELICITING AT ONE MOMENT LAUGHTER, AND ALTERNATELY ROLLS OF APPLAUSE.

8. WIDE PUBLICITY WAS GIVEN IN PANAMA TO CASTRO'S WARNING TORRIJOS AND PANAMANIAN "NOT TO BITE THE HOOK OF IMPERIALIST PROVOCATORS" BY INITIATING VIOLENCE AGAINST THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE. TO DO SO, SAID CASTRO, WOULD PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF "THE IMPERIALISTS". TORRIJOS THANKED CASTRO FOR THIS GOOD ADVICE.

9. MARIO VELASQUEZ ON PANAMA'S CHANNEL 2 TV COMMENTED ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISIT. HE SAID IT IS AN EXPRESSION OF PANAMA'S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY AND OF THE CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM. TORRIJOS GAINED A NEW EXPERIENCE--A FIRSTHAND LOOK AT SOCIALISM. TORRIJOS' OWN APPROACH AS INSTITUTIONALIZED IN THE PANAMANIAN REVOLUTION IS DIFFERENT. VELASQUEZ ALSO ASSERTED THAT TORRIJOS' "RADICALISM LIES MORE

IN HIS ADVERSARIES' FEARS THAN IN THE REALITIES OF HIS
GOVERNMENT POLICY OR POLITICAL PROPOSALS." THIS, NEVERTHELESS,
HAD NOT PREVENTED HIM FROM BRINGING ABOUT CHANGES AND REFORMS.

10. COMMENT: TORRIJOS' CUBA ADVENTURE, FROM THIS VANTAGE
POINT, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN HANDLED WITH SKILL AND DISCRETION.
WHILE AN IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF THE FULL POLITICAL IMPACT HERE
IS NOT POSSIBLE YET, WE BELIEVE TORRIJOS HAS UNDERCUT, FOR A TIME,
HIS LEFTIST CRITICS AS A RESULT OF CASTRO'S WARM RECEPTION AND
MODERATE ADVICE TO TORRIJOS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE GENERAL HAS
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 PANAMA 00373 02 OF 02 170248Z

MADE EXPLICITLY CLEAR THAT SOCIALISM IS NOT THE PATH OF THE
PANAMANIAN REVOLUTION--SOMETHING THAT SHOULD REASSURE LOCAL
CONSERVATIVES.

JORDEN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, PRESS CONFERENCES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PANAMA00373
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760017-0992
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760147/aaaabpju.tel
Line Count: 243
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUL 2004 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <13 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TORRIJOS TRIP TO CUBA: IMPACT AND PRESS TREATMENT SUMMARY: IF PANAMANIAN LEFTISTS OR PERSONS ELSEWHERE EXPECTED
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, PN, CU, (TORRIJOS HERRERA, OMAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006